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FM AMEMBASSY ROME  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7637  
INFO RUEHXP/ALL NATO POST COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 0550  
RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PRIORITY 0310  
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RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 0651  
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RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 0939  
RUEHTI/AMEMBASSY TIRANA PRIORITY 4301  
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI PRIORITY 0219  
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY 2310  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 0430  
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY 8544  
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY 2462  
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RUEHPS/USOFFICE PRISTINA PRIORITY 0393  
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ROME 000710

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/04/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [UNSC](#) [EUN](#) [IT](#)

SUBJECT: ITALY: FM D'ALEMA ON KOSOVO, AFGHAN NGO DETAINEE,  
MEPP, LEBANON, IRAN SANCTIONS, GUANTANAMO AND ABU OMAR

REF: A. STATE 36991  
[1](#)B. STATE 37005  
[1](#)C. STATE 41871  
[1](#)D. STATE 42573  
[1](#)E. ROME 625  
[1](#)F. ROME 702

Classified By: AMBASSADOR RONALD SPOGLI, REASONS 1.4 B AND D.

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C/NF) Amb. Spogli got FM D'Alema's agreement to make a clear statement in support of the Athisaari plan for Kosovo and was told that the FM did not think he could or should control an Italian NGO threatening to close its hospitals in Afghanistan unless one of its employees was released by the Afghan Government. During an April 5 tour d'horizon, the Ambassador and FM also discussed Iran sanctions (D'Alema said Italy was applying the rules thoroughly), the Middle East peace process (D'Alema worried the Israelis and Palestinians would miss an opportunity for progress), Lebanon (where everything but UNIFIL is at an impasse, according to the FM), and the Abu Omar case. The Ambassador briefed D'Alema on the request that Italy consider taking some Guantanamo detainees to help speed the closure of the facility. D'Alema said trying to close Guantanamo was a noble step and that if Italy could help, it would try to do so (see also septel on Guantanamo). End Summary.

Afghanistan and Emergency Now

[1](#)2. (C/NF) On April 5, Ambassador Spogli and Foreign Minister

D'Alema discussed key issues on the foreign policy agenda. The Ambassador raised concerns about the statements of Gino Strada, head of the Italian NGO Emergency Now, who was threatening to close his hospitals in Afghanistan unless the Afghan Government released one of his staff being held for possible terrorist affiliations. The Amb. said such an unwelcome step would be punishing the Afghan people and asked if D'Alema could help get Strada to stop making threats. D'Alema replied that he had spoken with Strada, who told him that if his employees are going to be arrested in Afghanistan, he would move his operations to a country that doesn't arrest his staff. D'Alema told the Amb. that all sides needed to show flexibility and that if the Afghan Government had evidence against the individual being held, it should be shared. D'Alema noted that Italy was grateful to the U.S. Embassy in Kabul for helping secure Red Cross access to the detained individual. Then, somewhat exasperated, he said, "Strada is who he is. He runs an NGO. He is not part of the Italian Government. He says they cannot work in Helmand without having contact with the Taliban. He thinks the Taliban have the legitimate support of the people there. We have urged him to be prudent. But we do not control him and he feels threatened." D'Alema then said that during the Mastrogiacomio kidnapping the Taliban cell phones that were traced all had Pakistani numbers, and that if terror bosses could live carefree in a Pakistan that could not be reproached because of its alliance with the U.S., we would not win this war.

#### Kosovo - Firm Support for Status

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13. (C/NF) The Ambassador noted that the Italian position on the Athisaari plan for Kosovo had generated some confusion and that a clear statement of support would be very helpful. D'Alema emphatically insisted that Italy supported the Athisaari plan's core status provisions ("they should not be touched"). Italy continued to believe that some non-status issues, like protection of religious sites and minority rights, however, could still be improved. He said there were two unacceptable outcomes: continuing the status quo and a unilateral declaration of independence by Kosovo. The latter would tear Europe apart and pull the legal legs out from under the European mission to Kosovo. He argued that a UNSCR was needed that would help soften the Russian position, and a proposal needed to be crafted for Serbia - something conditional with flexible rewards - that could be offered to Belgrade when Serbia inevitably rejects Kosovar independence. Without these elements, the region could be destabilized, he said. He added that Italy had been clear in its talks with Russia and everywhere else that it would absolutely support Athisaari's core status proposal without prolonging talks and without new negotiations. The Ambassador asked if D'Alema could make a public statement to that effect. D'Alema agreed to do so.

#### Iran Sanctions - Italy in Compliance

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14. (C/NF) The Ambassador asked how Iran sanctions were proceeding for Italy, and noted our disappointment that when action was taken against Bank Sepah in Italy all funds had already been moved. D'Alema said the Iranians knew it was coming and were a step ahead, as they had been elsewhere. He added that when he had spoken with Larijani early in the week to urge the release of the UK sailors, Larijani had protested vigorously about the action against Bank Sepah. D'Alema asserted "we are applying the sanctions rules. We are in compliance. But Italy is also the victim of the sanctions and is excluded from negotiations with Iran and from the group with primary responsibility for decisions on Iran, despite being a UNSC member."

#### Israel-Palestine: About to Miss an Opportunity?

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15. (C/NF) The Ambassador thanked D'Alema for his recent helpful comments insisting that Palestinian leaders accept

the three Quartet conditions before Italian officials would meet with them. The FM said he feared a moment of opportunity was being lost. Abu Mazen was stronger than before but needed to find a way to get results out of his dialogue with Olmert. Both sides, he said, need to be pushed and encouraged. Without progress the risk of violence would increase. He suggested what was needed now was a confidence building phase with limited ambition focusing on releasing prisoners, improving Palestinian quality of life, granting more freedom of access/movement and getting credible security assurances for Israel. The Palestinians, he said, would never accept an independent state within provisional borders, because they believe this means they will never get final status issues resolved. He envisions an eventual regional final status conference, but not until the open final status questions have been resolved by the two sides. He said with both sides weak and lacking strategies to reach solutions, the international community needed to step in and offer hope for positive movement. Europe should press the Palestinians and the U.S. should press the Israelis in a coordinated division of labor, he suggested, adding that the Palestinians needed to hear the message that when the time comes, the U.S. would be willing to push Israel to resolve the final status issues. He informed the Amb. that Abu Mazen would be in Rome in the coming weeks.

#### Lebanon - D'Alema Concerned

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¶6. (C/NF) Turning to Lebanon, D'Alema said he was very concerned because the only thing working there was UNIFIL. Everything else was totally blocked. Parliament was not meeting. Reconstruction was at a standstill. The economy was in danger. There was no progress on the arms embargo or Sheba Farms. He said the Lebanon Contact Group meeting in London had been a good step and hoped that the group would meet at the political level to help bolster UN action. He also said some way had to be found to get Syrian buy-in or the embargo would never work.

#### Guantanamo Detainees - Closure a Noble Idea

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¶7. (C/NF) The Ambassador briefed D'Alema on the request for Italy to consider taking some of the 25 releasable Guantanamo detainees who could not be returned to their countries of origin. D'Alema said it was a delicate issue, but the idea of trying to close Guantanamo was noble, and if Italy could find a way to help, it would. The devil would be in practicalities of whether Italy could take any of the detainees. (See septel for PM and Min. of Interior views on taking Guantanamo detainees.)

#### Abu Omar - Pre-emptive Letters

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¶8. (S/NF) D'Alema closed the hour-long meeting by noting that he had asked the Secretary if the Department could send something in writing to him explaining that the U.S. would not act on extradition requests in the Abu Omar case if tendered. This, he explained, could be used pre-emptively by the GOI to fend off action by Italian magistrates to seek the extradition of the implicated Americans. D'Alema said he understood that L had discussed this with the Italian Ambassador in Washington. Amb. Spogli explained that we were waiting for the constitutional court to decide on the merits of the case before deciding on our next steps, because Min. of Justice Mastella had suspended action until that court rendered a decision. The FM noted that there was still the risk of action by the magistrates at any time. The Ambassador agreed that we should work to avoid having extradition requests forwarded.

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